

# AMATEUR CORRESPONDENT

FIRST ANNIVERSARY  
NUMBER



*Clark Ashton Smith  
Chester D. Cuthbert  
W. I. Parks  
W. C. Peters  
Paul Hayward  
J. Francis Hatch  
Robert Sanders Shaw*



# AMATEUR CORRESPONDENT

"The Magazine for the Amateur Fantasy-Writer"

CORWIN F. STICKNEY

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Cover Design, Illustrating "From Forgotten Ages"  
Drawn by Burton C. Blanchard

# ANNIVERSARY



## *An Editorial*

WE HAVE TRIED to make this, our First Anniversary Number, representative of the five issues of the Correspondent published during the past year. In it, we hope you will find the best qualities of those issues, in addition to several new developments in our format and policy, which, in our opinion, are for the better.

In the first place, we point proudly to Clark Ashton Smith's highly informative article, *Atmosphere in Weird Fiction*. It is obvious that this work required much thought and research, and we dare say that it is by far the "slickest" thing ever printed in an amateur magazine. It is superb, scholarly, educational--but then, we had better leave some adjectives for you to use after you've read it!

The other professional writer contributing to this issue is Chester D. Cuthbert, who, in *A Warning on Collaboration*, has written an interesting little piece which serves as an excellent preface to Mr. Parks' 8,000-word yarn, *From Forgotten Ages*. Both of these works are guaranteed to be what is colloquially termed "good stuff".

Among the amateur authors, we are pleased to print another of Mr. Hatch's efforts, this time a short story. We think you'll like it even more than his sonnet in our last issue, which has received more compliments than anything else we have ever printed. This fellow has undeniable writing ability and should go far up the ladder of success.

Another novice showing definite promise is W. C. Peters. His *Sniper* indicates good imagination and fine dramatic ability, and should meet with your favor. You will see more of him, we think, and also more of the two remaining amateurs, Paul Hayward and Mr. Shaw, both of whose contributions lean to the philosophical side.

Possibly the first thing you noticed on looking through the magazine was the absence of *Hobbyana*. Though the majority of reports on its first appearance favored this department's continuance, an even greater majority later informed us that although the columns were well-done, they were decidedly out of place in the Correspondent; they have been accordingly dropped from our make-up. We shall be glad to follow out any other constructive criticisms of the Correspondent you can offer, if we are convinced that the greater part of you readers desire such action to be made.

It is necessary to remind those of you whose subscriptions expire with this or the next issue to renew at your earliest possible convenience. If you will do this, and in addition patronize our advertisers whenever the chance arises, we shall keep the subscription rate at twenty-five cents, being also able to give you many more improvements and make increasing progress during the next year. We hope this issue packs enough weight to win your cooperation.

# A WARNING ON COLLABORATION

By

*Chester D. Cuthbert*

IN SEPTEMBER OF 1932 there was a dearth of fantasy reading material available in Canada because a tax effective in October, 1931, put the price of Amazing Stories up to 45c, and other magazines were costly in proportion. Fearing they could not sell them at such prices, dealers would not import them. Fans were reduced to desperate expedients to obtain fantasy stories, and my attempt to solve the problem led me to write other Canadian fans to see if we could work out a system of lending one another special items from our respective libraries.

My plan met with no success. It did, however, result in a correspondence with William L. Parks, a fan who had started fantasy reading with Argosy-Allstory and had continued with Weird, Amazing, Wonder, and Astounding as soon as these magazines made their first appeals to the public. I had written a few short stories, none of them in the fantasy field, without success; and I was delighted to learn that Mr. Parks had made attempts at writing science-fiction. Immediately, I suggested collaboration.

Mr. Parks was willing. He sent me a story called "Diminution", which had been inspired by "The Girl in the Golden Atom", and an untitled story based on the Amazing Stories cover contest of December, 1926. "Diminution" had been submitted to Amazing, held by them for several months, and then returned with a note that it had got snowed under in the shuffle when Gernsback went out. We decided that both stories were out of date, and agreed to try something new.

Early in December I sent him a plot outline which he O.K.'d. Then came the problem of how we should both manage to work on it. Finally we agreed that each should write a story based on the plot, each read the other's story and, picking out the best incidents in each version, combine them to produce a super story.

I had almost finished my version when I received his. I read his story, becoming more and more flabbergasted as I proceeded. When I had finished it I hastened to complete my own, called "The Last Shrine", and sent it to him.

I quote from his letter acknowledging my story: "If required to sum up my reactions in a single word, it would be 'stunned'. . . . One would hardly believe that two stories so radically different in every way could be written around the one idea."

He had exactly expressed my reaction to *his* story.

Unfortunately, having used the same plot, we could not submit both stories. And because they were so dissimilar, neither of us could use a single idea from the other's story to improve his own!

As my version was the longer by two or three thousand words, we edited it together and submitted it, intending, if it failed to make the grade, to try his later. Wonder Stories therefore missed a good story by accepting mine; and Bill's is still languishing in a trunk.

So my expression on collaboration is: Don't use the Parks-Cuthbert method.

# FROM FORGOTTEN AGES

By

*W. I. Parks*



**EDITORIAL NOTE:** As a testimonial of the advice given by Mr. Cuthbert in the preceding article, we are pleased to present the story he mentions therein. Those of you who have read his "The Last Shrine" in the July, 1934, *Wonder Stories*, will no doubt be interested in comparing the two stories, built around the same plot, but developed in such radically different manners. To those of you who have not read "The Last Shrine", we feel justified in presenting "From Forgotten Ages" for its literary value alone. In both cases, the story is what we consider a perfect illustration of our editorial policy---to print material which will be of some aid to amateur writers, but which is at the same time suitable for the assimilation of the average fantasy fan.

## *PART ONE*

THE YOUNG MAN came briskly up the long walk to the old stone house, which was set well back from the road as though discouraging curiosities. Handing his hat to the servant who met him at the door, he said, "I am Jeffrey Camden. The General is expecting me."

In a moment he was shaking hands with an upright, keen-eyed man a little past middle age, in a manner that showed plainly that real friendship sometimes known to exist between erstwhile teacher and pupil. The very real though restrained impatience evident in his every look and movement was not lost upon the older man: "I got your telegram, Jeff; now let's hear what's on your mind. I know you're hard to excite, you old globe-trotter, so this must be important."

"General," began Camden, "I want you to help me. I believe that if anyone can, you can. And I'd sooner come to you for help than anyone else; so I've come straight here from the Pacific airport. Not that speed matters so much, I guess, but we're used to hurrying at everything these days. . . . Guess this doesn't sound very relevant; I'll try to make it clear by beginning at the beginning."

"Perhaps you'll remember my confiding to you years ago, rather guardedly, something of the strange dreams that troubled my younger days---or rather, nights; how I've heard a woman's voice calling me, seen a woman's face appealing to me---for what? I couldn't know. They said I was psychically sensitive, and a lot of other things, but that didn't help my problem very much. And you know how that vision has been so real to me that I've spent most of my time and a deal of the fortune Dad left me, traveling around the world, seeking the answer to my life's great riddle---or escape from it---and found neither."

"A few weeks ago I landed in Chile, decided to make a trip into the interior,

and you can be sure I kept away from the beaten paths; I've been over most of those, in every land. Got pretty deep into unexplored territory, I can tell you.

"Well, to make it shorter, I'll just say that I was warned by my natives not to go any farther in the direction I was headed, and that when I persisted, the beggars lit out on me one night, so that I woke up in the morning all alone. Kept on going ahead, though, for I wanted to see the inhabitants of this section who had my boys so frightened of them, and didn't want to turn back at that stage of the game.

"That day I had my first meeting with the strange tribe, and a lucky meeting it was. I found a young chap, who turned out to be the chief's son, hanging onto a little ledge of rock on a cliff-side, and getting pretty tired. It was rather a risky business, but I managed to fish him up from there, and he was tremendously grateful. Took me to his town, and a strange enough place it was.

"These Indians have practically no contact with the outside. They call themselves by a long name which means 'Worshippers of the Hidden Shrine'; and it didn't take me very long to see that the local religion was a very unusual one.

"In a deeply-buried little valley, far back among those wild hills there stands a temple. The casual visitor can't see it---because he doesn't look at it long enough! That sounds crazy, I know, but I'll make it clearer in a minute. These Indians are rather savage chaps, and in addition to being their place of worship, this 'Hidden Temple' is also their guillotine. In fact, that was its first use; the religious status of the place was consequent on the lethal.

"Going into this little valley, one sees against the farther wall of rock an apparently open space. One of the ancient forefathers of the tribe, so run the legends, tried to cross this space, but the moment he stepped across a certain invisible boundary, he dropped dead. His companion told how the air grew deathly cold and colder as he neared the place, and how, fearing to approach too close, he drew the other's body back with a crotched pole---to find it frozen solid! You can imagine the place was left strictly alone, after that, until the then chief, smitten with a bright idea, constituted it the tribal place of execution. The criminal is blindfolded and his hands bound behind him, and he is then marched and whirled around in the open space until he has lost all sense of direction, and then he is headed in the direction of the temple and prodded forward. The only mercy, if you can call it that, in the proceeding is that he doesn't know how far he has to walk. Some of them 'choose to run'.

"Now naturally, such a place holds a peculiar terror, for primitive people especially, which fact prompted one ingenious chief to add a little torture to some condemned wretch's final hours, by binding him to a tree in the hidden valley, to look upon the place where he was to die. For a day and a night he sat there, gazing in fixed terror at the fatal area; and was found next morning to be raving of a beautiful white temple that stood there, where the others saw only empty space. It was of course assumed that the fellow was out of his head, but when the same incident was repeated some time later, a couple of braves decided to investigate. Sitting down and bracing themselves well, they gazed for hours at the forbidden spot, and each came away with the same impression of having seen, more or less distinctly, a white stone temple.

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# ATMOSPHERE IN WEIRD FICTION

By

*Clark Ashton Smith*

THE TERM *atmosphere*, in application to fiction, is often used in a somewhat vague or restricted sense. I believe that it can be most profitably defined as the collective impression created by the entire mass of descriptive, directly evocative details in any given story (what is sometimes known as "local color") together with all that is adumbrated, suggested or connoted through or behind these details. It can be divided roughly into two elements: the *kinetic* and the *potential*; the former comprising all the effects of overt surface imagery, and the latter all the implications, hints, undertones, shadows, nuances, and the verbal associations, and various effects of rhythm, onomatopoeia and phonetic pattern which form a more consistent and essential feature of good prose-writing than is commonly realized. Many people would apply the word atmosphere only to the elements defined here-above as potential; but I prefer the broader definition; since, after all, the most intangible atmospheric effects depend more or less upon the kinetic ones and are often difficult to dissociate wholly from them through analysis. An attempt to achieve purely potential writing might result, I suspect, in something not altogether similar to the effusions of Gertrude Stein! Or, at least, it would lead to an obscurity such as was practiced by the French Symbolist poet, Mallarme, who is said to have revised his poems with an eye to the elimination of kinetic statement wherever possible.

A few examples of the use of atmospheric elements, taken from the work of recognized masters, should prove more illuminative than any amount of theorizing or generalization. Take, for instance, this paragraph from Ambrose Bierce's tale, *The Death of Halpin Frayser*, one of the most overpoweringly terrific horror tales ever written:

"He thought that he was walking along a dusty road that showed white in the gathering darkness of the summer night. *Whence and whither it led, and why he traveled it, he did not know*, though all seemed simple and natural, as is the way in dreams; for in the Land Beyond the Bed surprises cease from troubling and the Judgement is at rest. Soon he came to the parting of the ways; leading from the highway was a road less traveled, *having the appearance, indeed, of having been long abandoned, because, he thought, it led to something evil*; yet he turned into it without hesitation, *impelled by some imperious necessity*."

Note here the *potential* value of the italicized clauses. The element of dream-mystery is heightened by the unknown reason for traveling the road, by the "something evil" which has no form or name, and the unparticularized necessity for taking the abandoned way. The ambiguity, the lack of precise definition, stimulate the reader's imagination and evoke shadowy meanings beyond the actual words.

In the paragraph immediately following this, the potential elements are even more predominant: "As he pressed forward he became conscious that *his way was haunted by malevolent existences, invisible, and whom he could not definitely figure to his mind*. From among the trees on either

side he caught broken whispers in a strange tongue which yet he partly understood. They seemed to him fragmentary utterances of a monstrous conspiracy against his body and his soul." Here, through the generalized character of malevolence imputed to things unseen and half-heard, images of almost illimitable spectral menace are conjured up. It should not be inferred, however, that precise statements and sharply outlined images are necessarily lacking in potential quality. On the contrary, they may possess implications no less frightful or mysterious than the wildly distorted shadow cast by some monster seen in glaring light. To illustrate this point, let me quote again from *The Death of Halpin Frayser*:

"A shallow pool in the guttered depression of an old wheel rut, as from a recent rain, met his eye with a crimson gleam. He stooped and plunged his hands into it. It stained his fingers; it was blood. Blood, he then observed, was about him everywhere. The weeds growing rankly by the roadside showed it in blots and splashes on their big broad leaves. Patches of dry dust between the wheelways were pitted and spattered as with a red rain. Defiling the trunks of the trees were broad maculations of crimson, and blood dripped like dew from their foliage." This, it would seem, is a prime example of kinetic atmospheric description, owing its power to a visual definitude and exactness rarely equaled. Consider a moment, however, and you will realize the added potential element which lies in the unexplained mystery of the bloody dew, and the abnormally strange position of many of the sanguine maculations. Things infinitely more dreadful and horrible than the blood itself are somehow intimated.

In much of Poe's best work, the atmospheric elements are so subtly blended, unified and pervasive as to make analysis rather difficult. Something beyond and above the mere words and images seems to well from the entire fabric of the work, like the "pestilent and mystic vapor" which, to the narrator's fancy, appeared to emanate from the melancholy House of Usher and its inexplicably dismal surroundings. The profuse but always significant details evoke dimly heard echoes and remote correspondences. Suggestion is less easily separable from statement, and becomes a vague dark iridescence communicated from word to word, from sentence to sentence, from paragraph to page, like the play of lurid gleams along somber jewels cunningly chosen and set. To this suggestive element the rhythms, cadences and phonetic sequences of the prose contribute materially but more or less indeterminably. As an illustration of well-nigh perfect atmospheric writing, embodying the qualities I have indicated, I quote from *The Fall of the House of Usher* the description of the room in which Roderick Usher receives his guest:

"The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eyes, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. *The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique and tattered.* Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to lend any vitality to the

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# The Waterfall

By

*Paul Hayward*

MUSINGLY, Walter Downley cast pebbles into the downrushing torrent of the waterfall, which cascaded into bubbling loveliness at the foot of its fifteen-feet drop. Somehow, the glistening waters fascinated him; fascinated him with the fearlessness, the recklessness, of their dash over the brink into the hollow below. The never-ending length and ceaseless roar of the waterfall made it, liquid though it was, seem as ageless as the granite walls it carved.

Down, deep into the billowy depths of the spray he stared---stared long and hard, as though expecting the appearance at any moment of some delightful nymph to weave a magic web and charm his weary eyes. Sleepily, he dozed; yet he knew that he wasn't entirely asleep. Something instinctive told him---warned him---that an unusual thing was happening.

For the methodical roar of the falls was fading---fading---and with it was going all bodily consciousness. It seemed that a pleasant, lulling voice was speaking; no, not speaking, but impinging into his very being a message; and that message was-----

"Earth Creature, you are the one-hundredth person who has sat at this spot and seen in the waterfall more than a wild liquid stream. You are not the only one who has realized that the reason for the existence of the peculiar atmosphere surrounding these ancient falls is far deeper, far more significant, than merely to fascinate the human mind with its constant sound and dashing spray. It serves the same purpose as the hypnotist's revolving wheel or gesturing hand---to completely subject a person to his wishes by erasing all thought from his mind.

"We, the spirits of those who have left before you, know of your ailment. We know that you can never be cured and that you are destined to a life of endless misery. If you wish the remainder of your existence to be as ordained, we will release you from our momentary spell and nature shall have her way. However, should it please you to throw in your lot with us, we can show you mental delights far surpassing any that can be experienced by an ordinary human being. Our select group journeys on the carrier thought inconceivable distances to the remote parts of the universe. Myriad, fantastic sights and illimitable knowledge will be laid bare to you, to be gleaned from a point of safety and vantage.

"But rarely do we return to Earth, and then only after eons to recruit one more intelligence to our ranks; you are indeed fortunate. However, as our stay must, of necessity, be limited, we can allow you but one minute in earth measurement to make your decision. Should you decide against our offer, turn your back upon the waterfall and pace away. But if you accept, gaze deeply into the spray of the fall as you first did, and your life forces will be freed from your body, to forever traverse the spaceways with us."

A falling sensation, and again Downley became aware of his body---but such a peculiar body!

Well aware he was of its existence; but at the same time he could neither

see, hear, feel, move, or perform any of the functions associated with the human structure! For a space he wondered, struggling with the thought; and then, suddenly, he knew.

His body was dead! It had died a natural death while he had been communicating with the other-world intelligences. He recalled snatches of what he had read somewhere about relativity---differences in time-rate----

*And he could neither turn his back upon the falls nor gaze into it.*

Despairingly, he thought of the beings from beyond, who, in a few short moments, would depart, unwittingly leaving behind a living soul in an expired house.

But what was this! He was no longer in his sodden body; he felt that he was rising! He was soaring upwards---not physically, but spiritually, mentally---to a plane that was infinitely above the petty, inconsequential intelligence that had been his.

He knew that he was reaching towards something indescribably glorious; and his swelling soul gave forth paean upon paean of joyous gratitude for the kind providence which had directed his body to die before an irrevocable decision could be made.



## THE IMMORTAL

By

*Robert Sanders Shaw*

I have seen mountains and valleys so low,  
And I've drunk from fountains 'neath a ship's bow---  
Marble carved fountains, where grey giants grow,  
'Mid the pained throes of Atlantean woe.  
I have flown spaceways, myself, all alone  
In a star-studded ship, shaped like a cone.

I've cursed at those silent stars--- brilliant, cold;  
They know that I shall never become old.  
I've solved a secret which men yearn to know;  
I am immortal, a demigod--- *Lo!*  
Tired, though, of living, I long to return;  
Withal my cursed gift, one thing I'll not learn,

Though it's a secret which all men can know---  
When through the dark ports of Death they shall go.

# SNIPER

*A Brief Tale of Morbid Fascination*

By

W. C. Peters

THE SLIGHT CLICK of the bolt as it slid the breech open was the only noise Michael made. He lay in almost perfect silence in the shadow of the chimney.

His gaze was riveted to the damp stones in front of a doorway in the narrow street below. There was only the dim glare of a small street light to illuminate his target, but it was enough.

Noiselessly, he moved his left leg from its cramped position, and wished that he could light a cigaret without being seen by a patrol of Tommies or Black and Tans. He coughed silently as he fished a clip of cartridges from his bandolier and admired their compact deadliness.

The doorway became lighter as someone opened the door and stood outlined there. Michael quickly slipped the clip into the chamber and slammed it shut. Then, as the figure moved out into the pallid light of the street lamp, he drew in his rifle and relaxed. The fellow in the street was not the right man; he did not wear the steel helmet of the British---he wore the black tam of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Michael reflected that he could have shot the man, and the enemies of the half-existing Irish Republic would number one less; but he was saving all his bullets for one man. There was only one British soldier in the city of Dublin that he wanted to kill. At eleven-thirty that man would step from the doorway below---and receive five Lee-Enfield bullets from an old acquaintance.

Michael had not sniped at a single Britisher since he had seen his present quarry. He had only dodged patrols of Tommies, fled for his life over the roofs---and followed his prey.

He looked at his wrist watch. It was eleven-twenty-seven; there was not much longer to wait. His thoughts flew faster than the second-hand on his watch.

He turned over in his mind the events of a few years ago that had bred such hate in him. He remembered the stone wall, the command of an officer, and a volley of shots. He remembered every member of that firing squad---even the man who was about to come out of the door below.

The hands on the watch indicated eleven-twenty-eight. Michael inspected the breech of his rifle; there must be no slips.

It began to rain. The rain came quickly and was soon pouring down in torrents, making hundreds of tiny rivulets of water on the roof. Michael was getting drenched, but he remained oblivious of everything except that doorway in the street below---and the man who would come out of it at eleven-thirty.

He gripped his rifle so tight that his knuckles became white. For the first time he noticed that he was sweating---and yet he was cold and drenched with rain.

His watch still indicated eleven-twenty-eight. He laughed half aloud to see that he was sweating and shaking so. He thought that he might be quivering with anticipation.

At eleven-thirty o'clock he must kill. He must send five steel-jacketted Lee-Enfields into the body of a man whose name he didn't know, but whose face had seared its image into his mind. He must kill with the same kind of rifle that had executed Dennis McDoolin as a rebel.

Michael looked at his watch again---eleven-twenty-eight. He must kill at eleven-thirty----. The rain was still pouring down; it made the doorway almost invisible. Michael became impatient; he looked at his watch again. Good Lord! It was still eleven-twenty-eight. He raised the watch to his ear; he held his breath as he listened---the watch had stopped. A peal of thunder broke the stillness---Michael stared, glassy-eyed, at the surface of the watch ---it had stopped---it was still eleven-twenty-eight.

Michael gave a wild cry of despair and jumped to his feet. He almost lost his footing on the wet roof, but he dug his heels into a rotten shingle and regained his balance.

A searchlight stabbed the darkness with a beam of glaring light. Tommies began pouring into the street with shouts of "Sniper!"

A machine-gun clattered away from an armored truck, and Michael saw several of the shingles on the roof splinter to pieces.

He became light-headed and dizzy; he suddenly wanted to run for cover. He tried to lift his rifle to send a few shots into the street, but the rifle fell to the roof. He stooped to pick it up, but it seemed as though it were made of lead---he could not lift it.

A door in the roof raised open and divulged British soldiers. They flashed a light on Michael, but no one attempted to shoot.

Michael fled.

Without trying to conceal himself, he made a dash across the roofs and hid behind another chimney, surprised that no one shot at him. Catching his breath, he watched the proceedings of the squad of soldiers. They gathered in a group.

Michael was curious; he crawled to a point where he could hear them talking. The sergeant was speaking.

"We got 'im, all right," he announced. "Three machine-gun bullets right in the head; we must 'a' got 'im just as 'e stood up and yelled."

"Wot's the matter, sarge; why are y' starin' at that stiff so hard?"

"It's nothin', Ainsworth; I thought for a minute that I'd seen this guy before."

The soldiers slowly returned to the door in the roof, leaving it quiet once more, and save for the body of the sniper that lay sprawled in death on the wet shingles, deserted. There was not a living person on the roof---Michael realized that when he looked at the face of the dead man.



# The Final Vision

## *Sparkling Fantasy*

By

J. Francis Hatch

A CANOPY OF SPATIAL, star-strewn lightlessness replaced the sunset glow. With eternally calm indifference the majestic and unutterably ancient mountains accepted the opacity of night. Feathery engravings of hoar-frost etched the small panes in the facade of the low frame building. The sole occupant gazed as though entranced into the lucid sphere, unaware of all else.

As such, it, too, was hidden by the encompassing curtains of his sheer concentration. His eyes dismissed the polished periphery; his mind assumed an inexplicable transportation into the sphere, perceived the abstruse phenomena occurring within and interpreted them as substantial materialities.

Dream? No---no dream, these visions; real enough, to him, were they.

Projecting his will into the sphere, after quaffing the stimulating mixture of bhang and lotus juice, he explored the endless corridors of time and space. His cold, scientific fascination had changed at length into continuous thirst for the drug and devotion for the manifold experiences he could invoke with its ensorcelled aid. He managed to keep pretty evenly drunk on the Bacchanalian brew, and the Circean sphere occupied his every waking moment.

Little did he heed the effects upon his physical body.

He saw prehistoric monsters evolve in the swamps of ancient miasmal eras; saw sub-humans descend from the trees; saw majestic Atlantis, and witnessed the stupendous cataclysm that destroyed its profuse splendor; saw Nero pluck his lyre as the Cyclopean conflagration swept the city; saw the pharaonic tombs erected for posterity on the banks of the Nile; saw the Saviour crucified on Calvary; saw and wished that he could but once press his lips against the dainty bosom of creamy-skinned Aphrodite.

Into the future, too, had he peered.

He saw the continents of earth ravaged by scientific, eldritch conflict; saw man rebuild that which he had thoughtlessly obliterated; saw mighty ships, capable of crossing stellar distances, ply between the planets, pushing beyond yesterday's finite limits humanity's last frontier of tomorrow; saw an incomprehensible cosmic plague exterminate all types of life; saw the planets falter in their orbits, fall into the sun to replenish the dying atomic fires; saw the final dispersion of matter. . . .

Unlimited and unimaginable were the possibilities opened for view.

Tonight. . . . He saw her then, as the sphere cleared beneath his intense will. She was walking in a moonlit garden. Gorgeous flowers bordered the path, swayed to her approach. Her long, graceful fingers plucked a huge red poppy, lifted it to her delicate mouth. The argent glow set little corruscations dancing in her eyes. The golden glory of her hair fell like a vernal cascade to her waist. He felt, as he watched, that he knew her---had known her long, long ago. Some Babylonian maid of royalty, queenly and proud. What was her name? . . .

How lovely! . . .

As though she had heard his unspoken praise the lovely oval of her face lifted to him. She stared up, up into his adoring eyes. She could not see

him so far away in time and space, but she was aware of his will. The exquisite lips favored him with a radiant smile as she unconsciously clasped the red blossom between her unclothed, up-tilted breasts.

Sudden ineffable longing for her flowed through his veins; uncontrollable, inexpressible.

She raised slender, supplicating arms to the Babylonian heavens. Although quite unable to localize the source where came the waves of breathless anticipation of untold delights, she threw wide the portals of her heart for their reception, offering her beauty as a sacrifice to that unsounded reverent desire. And, watching her, he knew that never, even in myth, had the true loveliness of Babylon been adequately described; knew too, now, that he wanted her more than anything he could ever want in life--or yet, in death. Her enticing body, her alluring, tender arms, her delectable lips--the overwhelming, ambrosial lusciousness of her reached out to him through the intervening milleniums, clutched his heart with unparalleled enchantment. And, at the same time, brought ultimate sorrow.

He strained his will to the utmost that the enrapturing vision might not fade. Tears born of hopelessness streamed down his cheeks. Why had he been born these many thousand years too late? Why? . . .

A paroxysm of excruciating agony stabbed his brain, wringing from the depth of his being a trembling, desolate groan of despair. He sobbed convulsively a few moments. Without warning all that was real of his own unremembered space and time went spiraling into nothingness. He felt his soul wrenched free from the material thongs of terrestrial flesh. He hurtled headlong downward through inconceivable leagues of reeling distance and centuries of forgotten antiquity.

Abruptly, in some manner beyond his comprehension, he stood before her. Disbelief and amazement mingled with sheer wonderment suffused the lovely oval face. Heedless of the magic by which he had been transported to her presence, he raised eager arms. She came then, a little timorously into his embrace. Tender passion effaced her astonishment.

"Lonaire!" he whispered, aware now of her name---and again, "Lonaire!"

His enamored lips hovered above her crimson, dulcet mouth. His affectionate hands caressed her tenderly as the flame of her kiss seared his being with immeasurable ecstasy. Her languorous, azure eyes deepened with encouraging promise. There was a little bower close by surrounded with the balmy, aromatic foliage. A little wind rustled knowingly among the fragrant blossoms. . . .

Dawn tintured the Babylonian sky with erubescence. In the early dawn light the redolent garden grew vague and spectral. The splendidorous city beyond appeared ethereal, imponderable; a shadow of a phantom paradise.

Lonaire, too, became a vaporous entity; cloud-like, insubstantial. Her arms, as she clasped him to her bosom, grew tenuous. Terrified, he passed a hand through her delicious body, felt nothing, could not even capture a stray wisp of her wondrous golden hair.

As the light strengthened she became a wraith; unreal, shadowy. As a phantom she looked up into his eyes, her own alight with an eternal love. That faded---and she was gone, as was the marvelous, ancient city.

He was alone upon an arid desert. Memory of her seraphic lips was the only alleviation for the bitterness that tormented him. . . .

Dawn in his own space and time found him, at last, sprawled sleeping across the workbench beside the sphere. He awakened then, and gazed at it and about him without interest. His vacant stare was attracted by two glistening bottles. As the morning light grew stronger he amused himself playing aimlessly with instruments he failed to recognize.

## FROM FORGOTTEN AGES

(Continued from page 5)

The tribe appear to have been slow to convince, but gradually their entire religion has become centred there.

"It is held to be a great honor to be allowed to gaze at the temple long enough to see it, an honor sparingly bestowed. Here they hold all their ceremonies and feasts. Members of a successful expedition, heroes of any exploit, or others who gain honor of some sort, are given the great privilege of 'gazing'.

"Then, some twenty-five years or so ago, a tremendous upheaval occurred in the life of the tribe. During one of their periods of worship, several of the gazers claimed to have seen a white 'goddess' standing on the front stone steps of the temple. Incredulity gave way to conviction, as she was seen regularly thenceforward; and of course the priests took full advantage of this augmentation of their powers and prestige, to the vast discomfiture of the chief, who saw them encroaching increasingly on his power.

"The goddess has been known to disappear for varying intervals, usually six or seven months, but always reappears. She at one time failed to put in an appearance for five years, and you can imagine the mysterious interpretations and dire prophecies that arose during that time, as well as the carefully concealed disbelief among certain of the rising generation, of the existence

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of any such 'goddess'. All this, of course, was dispelled by her reappearance six or seven years ago, since when she has been seen quite regularly, for the usual six months or so every year.

"By means of the 'pull' I had with the chief, and which had been increased by my prowess with fire-arms, which were strange to these people, I managed to obtain permission to spend a day in the forbidden valley. About mid-afternoon I began to experience a peculiar sensation, as of memory stirring. I seemed to recall, vaguely, having had a fleeting glimpse of a white building of some sort, and then with a start I realized that it was the 'Hidden Temple' before me; and it had taken me hours of watching, to get even this glimpse of it. The particular object in mind was a white pillar, and the rest of the place was less distinct, since I had, necessarily, focussed my eyes on one spot. But of the mysterious occupant of the temple, I saw nothing. Reporting my failure to my friend the chief, I was advised to wait a few days, when she might appear. This I did, going to the valley at dawn, about a week later. By thus starting early, I realized sight of the place shortly after noon, and this time I had better luck. I found myself looking squarely at the 'goddess', and before sunset I could make out her features distinctly. General,"---the young man leaned forward in terrible earnestness---"you've got to believe me, even though it may sound mad. That 'hidden goddess' is *the woman of my 'dreams'!*"

"But, but---" the General stumbled. "Jeff, are you positive?"

"Positive!" was the decisive answer. Now listen, General. I don't know what value my vague theories may be to a man of your erudition, but anyway, here's what I've concluded. By some means, or freak of nature, the individual atoms comprising the 'temple' are vibrating at a

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slower rate than their surroundings, or indeed, than all earthly matter. This rate is so slow that it takes hours for their concrete image to register on our rapidly-vibrating visual organs."

"Hmm," mused the other. "Sounds reasonable. You may be right, Jeff. But if I didn't know you for the hard-headed individual you are, I'd be inclined to incredulity. As it is, I'd certainly like to see this utterly unique phenomenon."

"It's more than a phenomenon to me, sir. For I haven't told you everything yet. *General, she recognized me!* Oh, I know it sounds crazy, but I'd take any oath on it. And so I've come to you for help. Help me get her out of there, somehow! Now that I've found the answer to the riddle that has pursued me through life, I'm as far from her as ever, unless there's some way we can bring her out of that place."

The older man was thoughtful for some time. "Your theory of the cause of this phenomenon seems sound, Jeff," he said at last, "and that being so, it is really very curious that you should have come to me just at this time. You know, since my retirement, I've gone back to my laboratory work, and I've been working hard recently, because I felt that finally I was getting somewhere with a new series of experiments I've been making, on apparatus designed to generate a field which will retard the rate of electronic motion in any substance. I believe it should be possible to reverse the process. But my dear Jeff, the cost of such an undertaking would be tremendous!"

Jeff smiled. "I've a very efficient representative, who looks after my affairs while I travel. My fortune has increased greatly, even over what it was when I received it. And I'll cheerfully spend every nickel of it, if that will assure success."

*End of Part One*

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In this department are found interesting comments and criticisms, representative of how the Correspondent is received by its readers. Though we cannot undertake to print all the letters we get, because of their very number, we cordially invite you to send in your opinions, be they in the form of praise or just good old "knock-'em-down-drag-'em out" brickbats. Each letter will be given our most careful and conscientious consideration, and we shall answer personally those offering most helpful suggestions and criticisms. Let's hear from you!

---

Dear Ed.:

Sept.-Oct. AC received, read and, needless to say, greatly enjoyed.

Will refrain from offering criticism on any of the stories, as the boys all show great promise, and have done a damsite better job than I could do---as view the enclosed manuscript. There's an adage about critics, too---something to the effect that "critics are like eunuchs. Both know how it should be done---" etc.

(Emphatically:) The enclosed ms. is *not* a contest entry. If you find it unsuitable toss it in the rainbarrel, or whatever it is you happen to use for a wastebasket.

I like the idea promulgated inside the back cover. There will probably be some who will scoff at the idea of turning up talent by a contest of this nature---much too insignificant, they'll yell---but you can remind them of the lad who, after winning only third prize, went *places*---David R. Daniels, remember? And, but for his untimely decease, would undoubtedly have won a place in the hearts of science-fiction (S. M., please note.) enthusiasts equal to that reserved for Stanley G. Weinbaum.

Pardon me now, as I'd like to put in a word concerning Richard Wilson's ichorous (yes) missive. No one can say that a magazine is good or not and expect his word to be the final judgement. One likes or dislikes. I, personally, like the magazine. Obviously, Wilson does not. If I did not like it I should, without any undue procrastination, cancel my subscription.

Speaking, without splitting hairs in fourths or sixteenths, generally; I find Amateur Correspondent comparable to Esquire. That is, of course, certainly not in price, but particularly in fictional content. Indeed, I won't be surprised if "The Last Scoffer" or "The Jest of Tianne" is included with O'Henry's or O'Brien's bests for 1937. (Tut-tut, Wilson.) ----Very truly, Joe Hatch, 334 Maiden Lane, Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Stinckey;

AmatCor received. Reactions mixed.

It is true, as one reader said, that you supply a "big-mag" element that is much needed. You have, in a way, filled the place of Fantasy.

You carried several good pieces. The Wrath of Zeus piece was among the best. Bloch's satire was good reading, but showed little talent. I wish you'd let Lovecraft rest in his grave. Moskowitz' article undoubtedly expresses the viewpoint of some, though I disagree, and I believe nearly all the others will after a little thought. Hit 'N' Run is good and long. I'm glad to see you putting the advertisements to some use, i. e., to isolate Hobbyana. Would suggest that you give Sidenius' stuff more of the appearance of an advertisement and less of an article. You have your good points.

#### BUT

Hobbyana may be a necessary evil, but it's still an evil.

You may publish good fantasy, but it is still fantasy.

There is almost no s-f content.

You ignore fans in the false belief that there are others in your audience.

Therefore I am not resubscribing. ----Jack Speer, 117 North Fourth Street, Comanche, Oklahoma.

(Comment: Woe are we!)

\* \* \*

Editor, Amateur Correspondent:

I have just finished reading the Sept.-Oct. issue of your magazine, and, if it does you any good to be told, I must say that it is a tremendous improvement over the previous issue. Quite apart from the very workmanlike and equally pleasing format of the publication, I found the contents far more interesting than of yore---probably because you included a reasonable quantity of material pertaining to science-fiction.

What tickled my fancy the most was the contribution by "Professor Robert Bloch-head," which, apart from its raw distortion of names, contained plenty of first-class humor. With all due respect to the able Mr. Bloch, I suggest that he is missing his vocation, for he is obviously capable of turning out humor of quality good enough for the slick magazines.

Anyway, I must certainly compliment you on your latest effort. Carry on---and best of luck! ---Yours very sincerely, Eric Frank Russell, 44, Orrell Road, Orrell, Liverpool. 20. England.

\* \* \*

Editor, Amateur Correspondent:

Let me congratulate you on the Sept.-Oct. issue which is undoubtedly the best effort to date. However, don't you think that you are wandering just a bit too far away from the s-f side of the story? The only department reminiscent of the good old Fantasy days is the cut of your Hit 'N' Run. However, occasionally you have a good article such as Mr. Moskowitz' or a Robert Bloch satire, which incidentally are always top-notch. Get more of them. ---Science-fictionally yours, James S. Avery, 55 Middle Street, Skowhegan, Maine. P. S. Mr. Bloch: How about T. O'Corner Stone, also?

Dear Ed.:

I am enclosing my effusion evoked in response to your contest announcement in the current issue of A-C. Perhaps the less I say about it, the better ---it is my first attempt at anything of this in quite some years. However, it ought to at least pass the entrance requirements since (1) It is (I fear) "fantastic". (2) I don't *think* it's far from 1500 words in length (I clocked it at 1483!). (3) With good luck and the customary efficiency of our postal department it will, I hope, clear your October 30 deadline. So here it is, and with it go my apologies to Artist Blanchard for any liberties I may have taken with the drawing.

Oh yes, your September-October issue. A great improvement over the preceding issue, which itself was extremely good. Bloch-head's "masterpuss" was indeed the star of the issue. Such subtlety of humor! I certainly appreciated Blanchard's "Last Scoffer". It must be terrible to die like that! (By the way, when does the next boat leave for Egypt?)!!! And the Binder boys' "Mysterious Stranger" was well worthy of comparison with Mark Twain's superb fantasy of the same name.

There is much to be said in support of Sam Moskowitz' contentions *re* the "degeneration" of scientific fiction. Even so I hardly agree with the bulk of them. And so to Hobbyana, dear old Hobbyana, which I see is still with us. Why not a department on the collection of rejection slips? *That* ought to go over big!

I certainly appreciated the volume of Lovecraft's poems. Well worth committing to memory, every one of them. (I haven't, as yet!) ---Yours very truly, Norman F. Stanley, 43A Broad Street, Rockland, Maine.

\* \* \*

Dear Stickney:

Regarding the latest issue of the Correspondent, I think that Hatch's

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poem leads all the rest. Prof. Bloch's thesis rates about 2nd place with me (possibly because I never suspected his being capable of such glib facetiousness and funning). Birchby seems to have the makings of another Clark Ashton Smith when it comes to description.

Moskowitz' article was interesting and timely. I can't speak to any extent regarding the scientific pulps, as I have only lately become acquainted with them. My theory regarding the matter is this: Most of the pulps are sold to a class of persons actually 10-15 years old mentally; consequently the editors demand that the stories be written for their consumption. Fast action, vivid description, and thrilling situation written in words that won't tax the vocabulary of their average (farmhand, mechanic, factory worker, etc.) reader. Most of these readers lack imagination, but have a sufficient amount to identify themselves with the hero and live through the story as they read it. An entirely different type of reader appreciates and is capable of understanding a story that calls for thinking on the reader's part. Perhaps I could develop this into a short article giving the other side of the argument as a reply to Moskowitz. (I agree with him that the true literary and basic fact content of the average pulp magazine is pretty low. However, poor Constant Reader---and buyer---isn't very well educated and I'm afraid doesn't want to be.) --- Sincerely yours, Burton C. Blanchard, Box 83, Cornish Flat, New Hampshire.

Dear Ed.,

Received the latest issue of ye correspondent, and while 'twas good, I do not think it was an improvement over last issue. The contents page, no doubt modeled after TWS, I noticed was good, and I hope you continue it thus.

As to the contents themselves, unfortunately I cannot say as much.

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liked best Sam Moskowitz' article and admire its sincerity, but I think that the true stf. fan doesn't buy the odious imitations (which he urges them to boycott) anyway. I know I never did, and never will.

Hatch's poem was *very* good, in fact as good as any I ever read in *Weird Tales*, with the exception of HPL's, Howard's and C. A. Smith's. The meter and rhyme leave nothing to be desired, and the essential note of weirdness is there with a vengeance. (N. B.: And I don't usually care for poetry!)

"The Wrath of Zeus" was a bit of vivid description, just as you said, but that was all. Nothing much in the way of a story. Nor were the Binders' or Mr. Blanchard's efforts. Both of the last two were good ideas but were not developed enough, due, I think, to your policy of low word limit.

And that is another topic I would like to talk about. You will have to give the authors a little more leeway in developing their efforts unhampered by limitations. Of course have a reasonable limit, but have it about four or five thousand words even if you would be able to print only one or two submissions an issue.

Also, you should about double the size of AC as soon as is consistent with your financial status. This would allow publication of fan news in addition to "Hobbyana" and such stuff. This would also please the "old guard" fans besides the amateurs and the hobbyists.

I didn't care much for Bloch's too pointed comments and putrid puns. I was also surprised, as he usually turns out some pretty good humor. I suppose I will be set upon for this blasphemous statement, so I will give the readers a further chance to blast me. Enclosed is my own attempt at humor, which I hope will be good enough to be wedged in a corner somewhere. ---Sincerely, Arthur L. Widner, Jr., Bryantville, Massachusetts.

(Comment: Bloch fans, take heart! We have scheduled Mr. Widner's effort for our next issue.)

\* \* \*

Dear Mr. Stickney,

I received my copy of *Amateur Correspondent* yesterday, and I have just finished it. I think it is the best issue you have put out. The story I liked best in it was "The Last Scoffer" by Mr. Blanchard. The only thing I did not like about it was when Mr. Blanchard said on page 8, "Carson was looking for traces of the old Mayan civilization in South America." I am interested in American Archaeology, and I believe the Mayan culture existed only in Yucatan, Guatemala and Honduras.

"The Wrath of Zeus", by Sidney L. Birchby, was very vivid, but that is all there was to it.

Now for a few brickbats. Why not cut out Hobbyana and Those Stamps And Coins, and use the space to let your readers know what is going on in the world of science fiction. The picture on the cover of your Sept.-Oct. issue was pretty good, but I would like to see more of them by Virgil Finlay.

I hope your next issue is as good as you say it will be. ---Yours truly, Walter Sullivan, 10146-112 Street, Richmond Hill, New York.



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## ATMOSPHERE IN WEIRD FICTION

(Continued from page 7)

scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. *An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.*" Note here the carefully built impression of spaciousness combined with gloom and confinement, of lifeless and uncomfotting luxury.

Through the choice and emphasis of material details, an air of spiritual oppression is created, and the idea of a mysterious and monstrous unity between the building and its hypochondriacal owner is cautiously foreshadowed. I have italicized two sentences in which I seem to find a very subtle congruity between the actual sound of the words and their sense. In the first, the frequent repetition of the consonants r, s, f, and t somehow emphasises the image of "profuse" furniture; and the sharp dentals and sibilants add to the impression of things time-eaten and "comfortless". In the last sentence, the repeated letters, n, r, d, l, m, and v, are all of a heavy or deep sounding character, giving, with the long, close and sonorous vowels, a hollow and funeral clang that echoes the meaning. Here, too, the very movement of the sentence is like the dropping of a pall.

From certain of Poe's tales and prose-poems, such as *The Masque of the Red Death*, *Silence* and *Shadow*, one can select even more obvious and overt effects of atmospheric color supplemented by sound and rhythm. For illustration, I shall quote a single sentence from the prose-poem, *Silence*, and leave its analysis to the reader: "And ove head, with a rustling and loud noise, the grev clouds rush westwardly forever, until they roll, a cataract, over the fiery wall of the horizon."

From such instances as these, it will be seen how large a portion of the atmospheric elements in writing can sometimes be contributed by the mere sound of words apart from their meaning. The values implied are vaguely akin to those of music; and it should be obvious that really fine prose cannot be written without an ear for pitch, tone, movement and cadence.



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